

Psalm 50— Logotechnical Analysis

Guidelines

- Please read the [General Introduction](#) as well as the Introduction to [Book I](#) and [Book II](#).
- For common features found in the numerical analysis charts, see the "[Key to the charts](#)".

Specific features of Psalm 50

- This is the first Asaphite psalm in the Psalter, and the only one in Book II. For its function as a bridge between the Korahite and Davidic psalms, see the Introduction to Book II.
- The meaningful centre of the poem is to be found on verseline level (v. 12). Its pivotal position is highlighted by the fact that the middle colon (v. 12a) and the three pivotal words (in v. 12a) fall precisely within the central verseline.
- The alternating speeches of the two speakers, God and the prophet, are cleverly used as a device to give structure to this prophetic liturgy of divine judgement. Particularly significant is the use of the number of fullness, **7** - symbolizing the completeness of God's judgement - in the **175** (25 x 7) words, dividing into **126** (18 x 7) attributed to God and **49** (7 x 7) spoken by the prophet. It shares this feature, among others, with Psalm 51, which it preludes in terms of the idea of the proper offering: in Psalm 51 the proper offering is the contrite spirit of the broken-hearted sinner.

Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza boundary: ||

- Van der Lugt: 1-3, 4-6 || 7-9, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15 || 16-18, 19-21, 22-23 (3 cantos with 9 strophes, 23 verselines and 51 cola).
- Fokkelman: 1-3, 4-6 || 7 || 8-9, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15 || 16 || 17-18, 19-20, 21, 22-23 (5 stanzas with 12 strophes, 24 verselines – taking v. 21c separately – and 51 cola).
- Labuschagne: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6 || 7, 8-9, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15 || 16-18, 19-21, 22-23 (3 cantos with 11 strophes, 23 verselines and 51 cola).

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words attributed to God; **d**: words spoken by the prophet.
- The numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

		Total	a	b	c	d
1	מְזִמּוֹר לְאַסָּף	Heading	2	= 2	+ 0	
	אֵל אֱלֹהִים יִהְיֶה דְבָר	1	4	4		4
	וַיִּקְרָא אֶרְצָן		2	2		2
	מִמְזִרְחַת שָׁמֶשׁ עַד־מְבֹאוֹ:		4		4	4
	Total, v. 1	10	= 6	+ 4	= 0	+ 10
2	מִצִּיּוֹן מְקַלְל־יָפִי	2	3	3		3
	אֱלֹהִים הוֹפִיעַ:		2	2		2
	Total, v. 2	5	= 5	+ 0	= 0	+ 5
	Strophe 1	Total, v. 1-2	15	= 11	+ 4	= 0 + 15

3	יבא אלהינו ואל יחרש אש לפניו האכל וסביבו נשערה מאד:	3	4	4	4
	Total, v. 3		3	3	3
4	יקרא אל השמים מעל ואל הארץ לדין עמו:	4	5	4	4
	Total, v. 4		4	4	4
Strophe 2	Total, v. 3-4		10	= 7 + 3 = 0 + 10	
	Total, v. 1-4		33	= 22 + 11 = 0 + 33	
5	אספוד לי חסדי כרתי בריתי עלי זבח:	5	3	3	3
	Total, v. 5		4	4	4
	Total, v. 1-5		7	= 3 + 4 = 7 + 0	
6	וינידו שמים צדקו כי אלהים שפט הוא סלה:	6	3	3	3
	Total, v. 6		4	4	4
Strophe 3	Total, v. 5-6		14	= 6 + 8 = 7 + 7	
	Total, v. 4-6		22	= 10 + 12 = 7 + 15	
	Total, v. 3-6		32	= 17 + 15 = 7 + 25	
Canto I	Total, v. 1-6		47	= 28 + 19 = 7 + 40	
7	שמעה עמי ואדברה ישאל ואעידה בך אלהים אלהיך אנכי:	7	3	3	3
	Total, v. 7		3	3	3
Strophe 4	Total, v. 7-8		9	= 6 + 3 = 9 + 0	
8	לא על זבחיך אוכיחה ועולתיך לנגדי תמיד:	8	4	4	4
	Total, v. 8		3	3	3
	Total, v. 7-8		7	= 4 + 3 = 7 + 0	
9	לא אקח מביתך פרה ממקלאתיך עתודים:	9	4	4	4
	Total, v. 9		2	2	2
Strophe 5	Total, v. 8-9		6	= 4 + 2 = 6 + 0	
	Total, v. 10-11		13	= 8 + 5 = 13 + 0	
10	כי לי כל חיתו יערה בהמות בהררי אלה:	10	5	5	5
	Total, v. 10		3	3	3
	Total, v. 8-11		8	= 5 + 3 = 8 + 0	
11	ידעתי כל עוף הרים וזיו שדי עמדי:	11	4	4	4
	Total, v. 11		3	3	3
Strophe 6	Total, v. 10-11		7	= 4 + 3 = 7 + 0	
	Total, v. 8-11		15	= 9 + 6 = 15 + 0	
	Total, v. 1-11		28	= 17 + 11 = 28 + 0	
12	אם ארעב לא אמר לה	12	5	5	5
	Total, v. 1-11		84	= 51 + 33 = 44 + 40	

12 Mid. colon: 25+1+25

אם ארעב לא אמר לה

	Middle words: 86 + 3 + 86	פירלי תבל ומלאה:	4	4	4	
	Middle verseline: 23 = 11 + 1 + 11	Total, v. 12	9	= 5	+ 4	= 9 + 0
13	האוכל בשר אברים [^]	13	3	3	3	
	ידם עתודים אשתה:	Total, v. 13	3	3	3	
	Strophe 7	Total, v. 12-13	6	= 3	+ 3	= 6 + 0
		Total, v. 10-13	15	= 8	+ 7	= 15 + 0
		Total, v. 7-13	30	= 17	+ 13	= 30 + 0
			52	= 31	+ 21	= 52 + 0
14	זבח לאלהים תודה [^]	14	3	3		3
	ושלם לעליון נדריה:	Total, v. 14	3	3		3
		Total, v. 14	6	= 3	+ 3	= 0 + 6
15	וקראני ביום צרה [^]	15	3	3		3
	אחלצה ותכבדני: סלה LXX	Total, v. 15	2	2	2	
	Strophe 8	Total, v. 14-15	5	= 3	+ 2	= 5 + 0
		Total, v. 12-15	11	= 6	+ 5	= 5 + 6
	Canto II	Total, v. 7-15	26	= 14	+ 12	= 20 + 6
		Total, v. 5-15	63	= 37	+ 26	= 57 + 6
		Total, v. 4-15	77	= 43	+ 34	= 64 + 13
		Total, v. 1-15	85	= 47	+ 38	= 64 + 21
			110	= 65	+ 45	= 64 + 46
16	ולרשע אמר אלהים	16	3	3		3
	מהלך לספר חקיו	Total, v. 16	4	4		4
	ותשא בריתי עלי פייה:	Total, v. 16	4	4	4	
		Total, v. 16	11	= 7	+ 4	= 8 + 3
17	ואתה שנאת מוסר [^]	17	3	3		3
	ותשלך דברי אחריה:	Total, v. 17	3	3	3	
		Total, v. 16-17	6	= 3	+ 3	= 6 + 0
		Total, v. 16-17	17	= 10	+ 7	= 14 + 3
18	אם־ראית נגב ותריץ עמו [^]	18	5	5		5
	ועם מנאפים חלקה:	Total, v. 18	3	3	3	
		Total, v. 18	8	= 5	+ 3	= 8 + 0
	Strophe 9	Total, v. 16-18	25	= 15	+ 10	= 22 + 3
19	פיה שלחת ברעה [^]	19	3	3		3
	ולשונה תצמיד מרמה:	Total, v. 19	3	3	3	
		Total, v. 19	6	= 3	+ 3	= 6 + 0
20	תשב באחיה תרבר [^]	20	3	3		3
	בבן־אמה תתן־דפי:	Total, v. 20	4	4	4	
		Total, v. 20	7	= 3	+ 4	= 7 + 0
		Total, v. 16-20	38	= 21	+ 17	= 35 + 3

21	אֵלֶּה עֲשִׂיתָ וְהִתְחַרְשְׁתִּי	21	3	3	3
	דְּמִיתָ הָיִיתָ־אֶתְהִי כְּמוֹהֶ־		4	4	4
	אֹכִיחֶךָ וְאֶעְרְכָה לְעֵינֶיךָ:		3	3	3
	Total, v. 21		<u>10 = 7 + 3 = 10 + 0</u>		
	Strophe 10 Total, v. 19-21		<u>23 = 13 + 10 = 23 + 0</u>		
	Total, v. 18-21		<u>31 = 18 + 13 = 31 + 0</u>		
	Total, v. 14-21		<u>59 = 34 + 25 = 50 + 9</u>		
22	בִּינוּנָא זֹאת שְׁכַחִי אֱלֹהֶ־	22	5	5	5
	פְּו־אֶטְרָה וְאִין מְצִיל:		4	4	4
	Total, v. 22		9 = 5 + 4 = 9 + 0		
23	זִבַּח תִּזְדָּה יִכְבְּדֵנִי וְשֵׁם דְּרָדָ־	23	5	5	5
	אֶרְאֵנִי בִישַׁע אֱלֹהִים:		3	3	3
	Total, v. 23		<u>8 = 5 + 3 = 8 + 0</u>		
	Strophe 11 Total, v. 22-23		<u>17 = 10 + 7 = 17 + 0</u>		
	Numerical Total, v. 16-20		<u>38 = 21 + 17 = 35 + 3</u>		
	chiasmus Total, v. 21-23		<u>27 = 17 + 10 = 27 + 0</u>		
	Canto III Total, v. 16-23		<u>65 = 38 + 27 = 62 + 3</u>		
	Total, v. 7-23		<u>128 = 75 + 53 = 119 + 9</u>		
	Total, v. 4-23		<u>150 = 85 + 65 = 126 + 24</u>		
	Total, v. 1-23		<u>175 = 103 + 72 = 126 + 49</u>		
	With the heading and סְלָה (1x), v. 1-23		178 = 105 + 73		

Observations

- The middle words of the psalm are to be found in v. 12a, לֹא־אֹמַר לְךָ, 'I would not tell you' (175 = 86 + 3 + 86), but they do not constitute a satisfactory meaningful centre. We may consider the middle verseline, v. 12 (23 = 11 + 1 + 11):

אִם־אֶרְעֵב לֹא־אֹמַר לְךָ אֲ־כִי־לִי תִבֵּל וּמִלְאָה:

If I were hungry, I would not tell you // for the world and all that is in it are mine.

This does not sound particularly meaningful, which raises the question whether the author really endeavoured to contrive a meaningful centre in terms of words or poetic building blocks.

However, in terms of the divine speeches, God's 52-word address to his people about sacrifices in the heart of the poem (vs. 7-13) would be a most appropriate candidate. See below.

- The psalm is skilfully structured by the divine speeches (Column c) and the prophet's introductions and responses to them (Column d). Significantly, the 126 words attributed to God and the 49 spoken by the prophet are both multiples of 7 (18 x 7 and 7 x 7 respectively). Additionally, God's summons to his people (v. 5) and the first response by the prophet (v. 6) are both made up of 7 words. The function of the number of fullness is obviously to symbolize the completeness of God's judgement. The compositional structure of the psalm based on the speeches is in accordance with my view of the strophic and canto-structure, Canto I (Strophes 1-3), Canto II (Strophes 4-8), and Canto III (Strophes 9-11):

}	vs. 1-4	The prophet: Hark! The advance of the Judge!	33
	v. 5	God summons his covenant people	7
	v. 6	The prophet: response to the Judge's summons	7
}	vs. 7-13	God addresses his people about sacrifices	52
	v. 14	The prophet: offer praise as your sacrifice	6
	v. 15	God promises to rescue his people	5
}	v. 16a	The prophet: God will now speak to the wicked	3
	vs. 16b-21	God addresses the wicked in particular	45
	vs. 22-23	God addresses all those who forget God	17
		vs. 1-23 The entire prophetic liturgy of divine judgement	126 49

The first divine speech, God's summons, is addressed specifically to the members of the covenant (v. 5). It is followed by the prophet's response (v. 6), concluded in the Masoretic text by *selah* which clearly functions as a device to differentiate God's summons and the prophet's response (vs. 5-6) from the major speech addressed to the people (vs. 7-15). In order to differentiate this major speech (vs. 7-15) from the final major speech addressed particularly to the wicked (vs. 16-23), the LXX has another *selah* at the end of v. 15 (absent in the MT version in Codex L).

3. The major speeches in Canto I and Canto II are additionally demarcated by the *selah* at the end of v. 6 and by the refrain-like divine invitation in vs. 15 and 23. See [Psalm 49:13](#) and 21 for the same technique, and compare [Psalm 48:9](#) and 15.

4. It is important to note that the first major divine speech (vs. 7-13) comprises exactly **52** (2 x **26**) words, which symbolizes God's presence in the divine judgement.

Also worth noting is the sudden switch to 2nd person *plural* in v. 22, at the end of the second major divine speech addressed to the wicked in Canto III: '*those who ignore God*'. The change in number is a consciously utilized device to draw special attention to what is said in the concluding verselines 22-23. They are significantly made up of **17** words, once again symbolizing God's presence.

But there is more to it; the final verseline (v. 23) is clearly a coda, because it stands out within the final strophe by the abrupt return to 2nd person *singular* and by being a refrain-like divine invitation like the one in v. 15. For the coda, consult the General Introduction, "The use of a coda as a device for conclusion".

It is important to note that, in addition to the psalm as a whole, the coda also preludes Psalm 51 by referring explicitly to the *sacrifice* that honours God. In Psalm 51, it is the offering of the contrite spirit of the broken-hearted sinner who confesses his guilt.

5. Despite his use of the primary structuring number **7**, the author still managed to weave the divine name numbers into the fabric of the text. Note the marked preference for the divine name number **17**:

vs. 3-6	17 words after atnach
vs. 8-11	17 words before atnach
vs. 1-11	51 (3 x 17) words before atnach
vs. 10-13	17 words before atnach
vs. 7-13	52 (2 x 26) words in God's major address to Israel
vs. 12-15	26 words in total
vs. 7-15	26 words after atnach
vs. 5-15	34 (2 x 17) words after atnach

vs. 4-15 **85** (5 x 17) in total
 vs. 16-17 **17** words in total
 vs. 16-20 **17** words after atnach
 vs. 14-21 **34** (2 x 17) words before atnach
 vs. 22-23 **17** words in God's address to those who forget him
 vs. 21-23 **17** words before atnach
 vs. 7-23 **119** (7 x 17) words in total in the four divine speeches
 vs. 4-23 **85** (5 x 17) words before atnach
 vs. 1-23 **51** (3 x 17) cola in total.

6. The name יהוה occurs only once (v. 1), and so do אֱל (v. 1) and אֱלֹהֵי (v. 22); the designation אֱלֹהִים, 'God', occurs 9 times.

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